



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

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Remarks by National Security Advisor Susan E. Rice at the Chicago Council Global Food Security Conference

[As Delivered]

Good afternoon everybody. I want to begin by thanking my good friend, Ivo, for that very kind introduction. Ivo and I have had the opportunity to work together in various different capacities inside government and outside government--and in every circumstance, it has been a great pleasure and an intellectual challenge, and I want to thank you for continuing your very good work on complex global issues now with the Chicago Council. I also want to thank Doug Bereuter, Dan Glickman, and everyone at the Chicago Council for inviting me to join you today.

Throughout human history, the world has struggled with hunger and famine. For as long as mankind has cultivated crops, we've contended with drought and blight. But, in the past few decades, we've gained the tools to write a different future for humanity. At the World Food Congress in 1963, President Kennedy stated the cause very clearly: "As members of the human race, we have the means, we have the capacity to eliminate hunger from the face of the earth in our lifetime. We need only the will."

Since then, we've turned our will to reshaping our planet. The scientific achievements of the Green Revolution averted mass famines and saved more than a billion people from starvation. By adopting new seeds and agricultural techniques, countries that once relied on aid can now feed themselves. It's a compelling reminder of just how much we can accomplish with focus, ingenuity, and the will to get things done. So many of you here today have been instrumental in this progress, and I want to thank all of you for your extraordinary contributions.

I'm here because I want you to know that you have an enduring partner in President Obama and this administration. Not only Administrator Shah and Secretary Vilsack, whom you'll hear from later, but our food security team includes Tjada McKenna of USAID, Jonathan Shrier from State, Suzanne Palmieri from USDA, and many, many other dedicated public servants. [Applause]

They know, and you know, that ending food insecurity is profoundly in the interests of the United States. It's an outrage when children starve or when hard-working families can't afford to fill their most basic nutritional needs. We've seen what can happen when a spike in food prices plunges tens of millions of people into poverty—riots break out; conflicts for scarce resources cost lives; economies falter; instability increases. On the other hand, investing in agriculture is one of the surest ways to reduce poverty, expand economic activity, and grow the middle class. And that's why President Obama has made food security a top priority in our global development efforts.

When the President spoke here two years ago, he stated his conviction that the United States has "a moral obligation to lead the fight against hunger and malnutrition." That means it's not enough to simply keep responding to crises after they happen. We need to break the cycle of hunger by empowering more people to feed themselves.

And that's why President Obama put food security high on the world's agenda. In his first months in office, he announced a global food security initiative at the G-20 in London. In his first meeting with the G8 at L'Aquila, he galvanized an international commitment that put billions of dollars into the cause and outlined a new set of core principles for fostering greater food security. At every step, he has ensured America's commitments are matched by support from partner nations, from private sector entities, and from the public. Already the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition, which President Obama announced two years ago, has grown to include ten African countries. It has united more than 160 companies and yielded more than \$7 billion in responsible, planned investments in African agriculture.

At the President's direction, we have centered our signature, interagency development initiative—Feed the Future—around smallholder farmers, particularly women. Our commitments build on the leadership of African nations that have pledged to increase their agricultural spending and develop comprehensive, country-led food security strategies. And, through all of our

joint efforts to increase production, improve farmers' access to markets, and bolster natural resource management, we're relying on data to determine what works.

In just the past year, we helped 6.8 million more farmers put new technologies or management practices to work, up 30 percent from 2012. That translates to more than 4 million hectares of land—an area greater than the size of Massachusetts and New Jersey combined—are now benefiting from new seeds or increased soil fertility. Thanks to these improvements, farmers saw more than \$50 million in new horticultural sales. And, last year, with our partners, we helped more than 12.5 million children under the age of 5 to get the nourishment that they need.

Our government-wide investments in agricultural productivity are helping create economies that work. The Millennium Challenge Corporation is working with other agencies to develop compacts with countries that invest in agriculture, land tenure, and road development. The Peace Corps has fielded more than 1,200 enthusiastic Feed the Future volunteers to help people make sustainable changes in how they--those folks who are in developing countries--cultivate crops, address water shortages, and feed their families.

And today, I'm pleased to announce that we've completed a new USAID nutrition strategy. It's a 360-degree approach that brings together our work on food security, health, water, hygiene and sanitation into an ambitious plan to reduce child stunting by 20 percent over five years—that's 2 million more children who will get a stronger, healthier start in life.

And yet, as you know well, for all our progress, there are still millions who go to bed hungry, millions more scrabbling to sustain daily life. So, our next challenge is taking these promising beginnings and knitting them together to achieve a sustainable, food-secure future. Our aim is nothing short of bringing about a total transformation.

What will it take to achieve food security on a global scale? Our answer cannot just be more money or more aid—focusing on more won't get us where we need to be. We need to do better. In addition to making sure that agricultural innovations like drought-resistant seeds and fertilizers are widespread, we must ensure that better practices become routine. Farmers should have better information about which seeds are best suited to their soil. Mothers should be able to grow and purchase nutrient-rich foods to feed their children. For agricultural workers, earning a living wage should be the rule rather than the exception. So today, I'd like to suggest four areas that need our focus, if we are to achieve food security on a global scale.

First, we have to get our collective house in order. With Feed the Future, the United States made a commitment to change the way we do business—bringing together expertise from across the government; building on the leadership of countries that invest in their own food security; and partnering with anyone doing meaningful work to defeat hunger. We need to apply that same cooperative approach across the board. The private sector, academia, and NGOs should be collaborating more—both with each other and with governments—to unite our efforts and close gaps in the food security architecture.

The truth is, we already have much of what we need to reach our goal. Between us, we've got pipelines and distribution networks that circle the world. We've got experts in every subject. We just need to connect them. Everyone comes at food security through their own lens, but we're all working on aspects of the very same problem, and we'll certainly be more effective if we are working together. And that's why the Obama administration has put such an emphasis on building partnerships. And, I want to thank Interaction and the civil society groups who recently added another \$500 million to their pledge to advance food security in cooperation with Feed the Future. [Applause]

So these innovative partnerships, especially public-private partnerships, are essential to the future of food security. I know some have raised questions about private sector involvement. But, we won't improve food security on a global scale without the innovation, expertise, and reach that only the private sector can bring to sustainable agricultural productivity. Just ask any one of the 2.6 million smallholder farmers who benefited from the services, training, and production contracts the New Alliance and the Grow Africa partnership brought to Africa last year.

A second area where we can make an outsized impact is by stepping up our efforts to collect and share data. In the United States, farmers employ micro-level data on how the soil and weather differs between furrows even in the same field in order to optimize their crop production. In much of the world, however, we lack even the most basic information.

When we do have data, often we don't share it broadly enough. Sometimes, that's because data is proprietary. More often, it's because we simply haven't aggregated what we know. In both cases, our ability to innovate and to address global agricultural challenges is thus limited. Imagine the benefit to a farmer in Southeast Asia if she could use her phone to determine which crops would be most profitable. To do that, she needs data about the soil, the weather, seeds and appropriate fertilizers, as well as data about regional market demands—and she needs it to be available so a technology designer can build an app to translate that information into clear-cut recommendations.

And that's why the USDA has taken the lead in releasing genetic and genomic data for the new seeds we've developed such

as drought-tolerant maize, rust-resistant wheat, and high-yielding rice. Last October, the United States also helped launch the Global Open Data for Agriculture and Nutrition Initiative to help make critical data available for unrestricted use worldwide. I hope all of you will join with us in this effort—by contributing your own data, by using it to improve your projects, and by encouraging others to make open data the new norm.

As we focus on these organizational challenges, we also need to tackle the toughest issues in the hardest places. So, the third area we must focus on is making an impact in fragile and conflict-affected states, where poverty and hunger are most extreme and populations are most vulnerable.

The U.S. and other donors spend much, much more money responding to humanitarian disasters than we do in investing in building more resilient communities. Chronic poverty and periodic external shocks too often propel the same communities into crisis again and again. In fact, during the past decade, almost 50 percent of international humanitarian assistance has gone to addressing crises in just nine countries—like Sudan, South Sudan, and Haiti. The United States will continue to lead humanitarian efforts whenever disasters strike, but when we are repeatedly responding to the same problems, in the same places, we have to do more than stop the bleeding. We have to start healing the deeper wound.

And, that's why USAID is working with its counterparts to change the way we approach crisis relief. Rather than walling off our humanitarian assistance from our development programming, we're bringing them together to help countries become more resilient—so they can recover from crises and emerge all the stronger. Most of this work is still in the early stages, but it's already having an impact. In Ethiopia, we've invested in the government's social safety net to help it quickly scale-up food distribution in crises. When indicators of drought emerged in early 2011, the government added more than 3 million citizens to the safety net so that people could feed themselves until the November harvest. This fast intervention helped ensure that communities did not respond to drought in ways that could make future crises more likely, such as selling off land or livestock to buy food.

Finally, we have to confront the growing impacts of climate change on our ability to feed ourselves. For agricultural societies, even small changes in climate matter a great deal. Crop yields are extremely sensitive to changing rainfall patterns, the intensity of storms, and temperature extremes. In fragile states, climate change only amplifies existing stresses and puts additional pressure on scarce resources.

The latest IPCC report, the recently released U.S. National Climate Action Assessment, and today's report from the Chicago Council all say the same thing. Climate change affects every aspect of food security, from production to pricing. Climate change is not some distant threat. We're already dealing with its impacts. Globally, the 14 warmest years on record have all been since 1998. Droughts and wildfires have become more frequent and more intense in some regions, while flooding has intensified in others. Deserts are expanding. Water quality and quantity are being affected by changes in precipitation and runoff. Sea level rise is now increasing at about twice the average rate it was in the 20th century.

These are the facts. Observable, undeniable facts. And, President Obama is taking action to combat climate change by reducing carbon emissions and increasing our use of renewable and clean energy resources.

In the near-term, we have to compensate for the impact climate changes are having on our ability to feed a population—a global population—that is expected to break 9 billion by 2050. Already we've launched seven new "climate hubs" to help farmers and ranchers across the United States adapt, and Feed the Future is helping food producers around the world to adjust their practices. For example, USAID has helped farmers on the storm-prone coast of Bangladesh to adopt higher-yielding varieties of rice that were also salt- and flood-tolerant. These farmers increased their crop by about 20 percent, all while using less fertilizer and pesticide.

Our Climate and Clean Air Coalition is promoting better ways to manage manure from livestock to reduce methane emissions and boost incomes. The United States is also working with our partners to launch an international Alliance for Climate-Smart Agriculture, which will help farmers increase their productivity and income while simultaneously building resilience to climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. But, as you know all too well, there is much more to do, and the Chicago Council's report offers several recommendations to keep us moving in the right direction.

The good news is: we know we can make a difference. We already have. I think of those heart-breaking stories from 2008, during the food crisis, when hunger ran rampant, and children in places like Haiti ate mudcakes to quiet their bellies. Today, Haiti's farmers have doubled their harvest of rice and beans; corn production is up more than 300 percent; and acute malnutrition has been cut in half. It didn't happen overnight. It took strategic investments and sustained partnerships. And, slowly but surely, we've proved that progress is possible.

Confronting entrenched poverty in fragile states and meeting the challenges of climate change is necessarily work that must continue over generations, just as we are carrying forward the task that President Kennedy set for us 50 years ago. We have the means. We have the capacity. And, I can assure you, on behalf of President Obama, we have the will. Our commitment

will endure.

The United States will continue to lead the rest of the world toward the food-secure future we all seek. We'll continue to work with partners who are stepping up to address food security in their own countries. We'll keep bringing nations and organizations together so that millions more people can benefit from agricultural adaptations. We'll continue to seek new ways to withstand extreme weather and climate change. As President Obama announced in March during his visit to Italy, the United States will sponsor a pavilion at the Milan Expo next year to raise awareness about food security and nutrition. And, as we work toward a post-2015 development agenda to replace the Millennium Development Goals, we will ensure that all these issues—including boosting climate resilience, improving environmental sustainability, and ending extreme poverty—remain a global priority. And, as we do, we will make sure the world's most vulnerable populations are not left behind.

In all our efforts, those of us in government will look to all of you. Yours are the passionate hands that will remake the world. And, the United States will always be a reliable and steady partner to you in our common cause.

Together, we can imagine the day when the farmer who toils in the field has plenty—both to feed his family and to sell at the market. We can imagine when those who herd flocks or fish the sea won't have to wonder about their next meal. When mothers can regularly feed their children nutritious food that will help their family grow strong and healthy. That's the future we'll continue to seek, through every challenge and every obstacle: the day when the scourge of hunger and malnutrition is finally and forever banished from the earth.

Thank you very, very much.

A link to the USAID Fact Sheet *U.S. Government Initiative Reduces Hunger and Poverty for Millions* can be found [HERE](#)

A link to the new USAID Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy can be found [HERE](#)

These remarks originally [appeared](#) on the White House website.